Hello to the reader who happened upon this miniscule book drenched in criticism and activism. These pages are not happily laced, but laced by necessity with one person's awareness of this world. This world is a good one, but far from the best. These are eyes of privilege, a white, middle class male with a family accepting of his alternative characteristics, in a town that doesn't shun him for his traits. And if the eyes of privilege can see just how much there is to fix, then I think it should be within reason to hope that the whole world can open their eyes, too.

I am an activist and through poetry and other means, I hope to inform. The world we live in is a good one, but not the best one. I don't seek to change the world, not alone, anyway. This is a global life we live and I hope to open the eyes of whosoever digs up this small tome of commentary of the world as it is, or as it was when an observant, curious, and critical twenty-one year old penned it. It's a good world, but not the best one. I hope the reader's world is better and lament the reader whose world is worse.
If the reader is from the now of this writing, I hope that person, whatever race, gender, creed, nationality, class, education, age, or whatever other societal box holds that person, that they learn, question, get angry, act, communicate, and sympathize, not with me, but with the countless victims who suffered enough that a landlocked Lawrencian put pencil to paper and broadcast his heart and mind for the world, however small, to see. And the world is a good one, but certainly not the best.

I tell the story of the snapshot of this world my eyes could see, and as grim as it is, no photographer, no matter how skilled or ambitious, can take a comprehensive, detailed photograph of everything, no matter how small the world is. A single person's eyes cannot see all the problems or express them in a single manuscript, no matter how small the world is.

And the world is small and beautiful, good, but not the best. Certainly, though, our world is small. Our barriers are more synthetic than the bottle that holds your water. Those plastics form on a physical level; our barriers are often solely conceptual, and we can't make them real.

Instead of building these walls to differentiate, we should seek sameness, unify, and act together for change. I can hazard a guess about you, dear reader, you are hopefully curious, likely hopeful to see justice for everyone, and passionate about things important to you: loud about what upsets you, active to change it, doting on your interests and willing to share.

I hope you share your response with everyone. I hope you break the barriers between the "us" and the "them" and let the world know that this is a good world, but not the best. It's not easy to stop "themifying" others, and it's an eternal, internal struggle to fight off the barriers. I'm not innocent, I still do it from time to time, but it's crucial to acting, unification. Alone we're left to our own devices. Together we are us; we are all of us.

And all of us are powerful, many of us alone, but united far more formidable. Woman, man, child, it doesn't matter, if you have something worth fighting for, I hope if and when the time comes, you fight for it. If you won't do it, who will? Don't surrender to the bystander effect. The ones all around you expect the same as you do, so meet their expectations, don't wait for someone else to meet yours.

This world is a good one, but not the best. There are many flaws, many concerns, many worries, far more than one could list alone. The list is ever changing, once one thing is fixed, eyes must be drawn to whatever else will follow in its wake. I feel obligated, for context's sake to list a few things that are worth knowing about my now, that you, the reader, may not have in your own.

At the time of writing this, there is still wetlands
in Lawrence, fracking is legal, Africa (pick a country) is struggling, Joseph Kony is still alive, we have had only one nonwhite president (still in office, running for reelection) and no female presidents in the United States. Gay marriage is legal in some states, but not all, some places have legalized bullying on behalf of religious beliefs, people are arguing a woman's right to choose, and a woman has to work nearly seventeen months to make a man's yearly salary. Further, certain groups argue against contraception, even in lands where HIV is rampant, the cover of People Magazine is more important to most than malaria, we still use gas powered cars, all unleaded or diesel, some hybrid, very few hydrogen and electric cars, leaders seem to fear solar and wind power, fuel for vehicles is around $4 a gallon. These are just a few situations two American eyes see, and it's nowhere near comprehensive. I hope my children can see the wetlands, and I hope my wife, should I have one, makes as much as I do for the same work, and I hope there's a woman president, or a non-Christian president, or another nonwhite president, or even a nonpartisan president. I hope I live to see a day when most Americans don't consider socialist or communist inherently bad words, but rather just economic and political philosophies.

So I bury this time capsule in a pit of books, hoping that, one day, I, or someone else reads it. I hope when it is read again, that things have changed and for the better. I hope that I, and others like me now and later stand up for what we hold dear and don't let intimidation or ignorance or apathy (worst of all, apathy,) be the loss of whatever we respect. Once things are taken, it is far more of a challenge to get them back than to fight to keep what we already have and love.

These are things to consider and I hope they are better off in your now than mine, but to make them that way, those of my now need to act on what hasn't yet improved, and preserve what is already improved, and those of your now need to do the same where necessary. This is a good world, but not the best. So I hope that one day a reader reads this from a better world, since best is asymptotal. Just because we can't reach the best world doesn't mean we can't be striving for something better.

So with that in mind, read these pages, and, carry with you in life, the idea that this world is a good one, just not the best.

On My Poetics

Typically the way I write is based on a sudden awareness of a situation I want to bring to light for others. I typically will hear something that simply outrages me: the situation in the Niger River Delta, gay rights struggles, really, any injustice. I write in free verse most
often because it is where I feel comfortable, but also where I feel I can give the most merit to the things I have written.

I often start with a topic and develop a poem around it, usually it just comes as I write, though on occasion a particular line will stick out ("Even More Homeless" or "Never Seen The Night" for example) and I will try as hard as I can to develop something meaningful around it.

Sometimes I am inspired by things I read to create some form of homage (as in the case of the beautifully dilapidated visuals in Allen Ginsberg's Sunflower Sutra or the general tone of Amiri Baraka's writing.) Once I feel the inclination to write something, I tend to look at what it is I like about a piece or author and attempt to bring about that in something I write. The most successful example of that in my writing, I feel, is In Response To: Sunflower Sutra, and it is why I decided to keep that name.

I intend to inform people with my writing. I consider myself an activist, but I know that an important step in bringing about change is making people aware, and as such, I feel my poetry is a mechanism by which I can lead others to bring about change, instead of trying to change the world alone.

My entrance into the realm of writing poetry came about most prominently in my first year of college, when it was a venting tool to express my frustration with my early years. Over time I became very opinionated about various forms of injustice in the world and realized just how useful my writing could be as a tool to spread awareness.

My style has definitely matured over the years, I went from poetry of general angst to poetry primarily centered around sociopolitical criticism. I have other styles of writing (such as the first section, in which I took a few stabs at writing visual poetry to varying levels of success,) but I favor sociopolitical commentary because I tend to feel like it has a chance to persuade someone to do something, as opposed to being more aesthetic.

This particular collection works doubly with the title Time Capsule, because it includes poetry spanning my entire time at the university, and also it works as a collection that, perhaps in a few years, maybe decades, I can look back on these writings and see how life is (hopefully) different, for everyone.
Visual Poems

I open this series with a series of poetic images, the first of which is a visual of the world after we are gone. The poems that follow it are a three part "poetic comedy" which will display a trip from the place most disrupted by our hands to a place which has the least disruption. The last place is not absent of our interaction, but we work mostly in symbiosis with it. The visuals should display a place which is to be lamented for how it has been treated and as we leave the trilogy, the visuals shift to a place which is fairly close to a peaceful interaction with the environs that surround us.

The "poetic comedy" aspect comes from Dante's Divine Comedy; the first poem of the three (Potentially also titled Land of the Forgotten) is supposed to parallel Hell, and makes a few references to Dante's travels within; the second is supposed to refer to Purgatory (hence the judgment theme at the beginning); and the third is supposed to refer to Paradise (though I took liberty in saying that it is not a perfect place, as I am of the opinion nothing can be truly perfect.)

The Abandoned

Crumbling concrete walls covered in cracks and murals from graffiti artists seek practice
Tags, rags, and shopping bags, abandoned empty Krylon cans
Tables and fixtures in disrepair, nature taking back man's attempt to control her.
A bird's nest with three hungry chicks crying for breakfast.
The only light in this three story edifice is natural light and burned out hanging lamps swinging in place by a gnawed power cord.
Broken glass and rubble span the molding thatched and frayed nylon office carpet, damp from the rain leaking through the fragmented window.
A dank, musty odor wafts through, the smell of runoff and compost.
A fax machine in three pieces with the glass broken out roots itself into a powerless socket in the wall.
Somehow still beautiful, even comforting to the right eyes.
Something elegant about Nature's readoption of the stone, sand and metal that was so carelessly left to rot by those
that thought they owned it.
The outside walls covered in vines which strangle the statue on what was once a lawn.

Wind and sun have turned the sign into a faded and forgotten image of the place this used to be.

Scrap of leftover material which cost too much to reclaim and more were scavenged by buzzards and roots of cable stands tall and rusted against what was a garage wall.

The large lifting door half opened and covered in green and black spray, windows broken out, a raccoon lazing about in a leftover cabinet, rusted, with cracking bubbled paint, bits of fast food rappers and old cups of soda make a bedding for the creature in the part way opened apartment.

Wildflowers overtake the crumbling planters and the occasional tree shades the land.

In Response To:
Sunflower Sutra

Manufactured corpses scattered disrepair
shattered alone
sullen decaying
With tree root wires, rebar, pipes
trunk of oil drums leaves of scrap paper and foil
Leaking batteries, a head of a doll, a broken glass I raise
Here's to you, the fallen, forgotten
To you, returning to the soil from whence you came
I raise this shattered glass to your shattered window, long dead train car

No sign of natural life is seen, save the uprooted, rotting husk of a sunflower
The lone soldier of the natural living, destroyed by that which could kill the nonliving
Seatless chairs, broken wheelbarrows, busted cars crying shattered glass tears from their once glowing eyes

The colors once vivid fade to gray and rust and black.

Farther from the center of Dis, a Stygian flow of motor oil and battery acid,
Yet still so far less harsh, as grass reclaims the loosely-defined soil, growing where it can (and maybe shouldn't.)
A scrapped, upturned hood of a truck turned flowerpot as it fades to red sand
Cavity filled teeth of a
dilapidated, decaying
babygrand lie in ones
and twos on the
ground
Memories of the dead past,
old fallout shelter signs shot
to pieces,
fractured glass soda bottles,
floorset wooden cathode ray
screens sans glass
rot, a home to
termites
Old unloved garden tools wish
for their youth,
when they were something.
Foundations they dug, yards they
beautified,
now a redbrown neckless head,
nothing more
Plenty of things don't know what
they are anymore,
compost and shredded scrap,
dying undignified in heaps,
mass graves uncovered.
Outward the upper tiers of Hell.
Brave hungry birds risk
poisoning and
rats hide in old soup cans
breeding rats and rats
Roaches explore the wasteland,
rotting food and old stained
fliers,
single gloves, shoes, and socks,
dried tissues and antifreeze
bottles.
To the vestibule, a wasp nest
built on an old piece
of plywood
A Fox sniffs for scraps,
bringing mechanically separated
chicken to its kits,
leaving the plastic doll with
sauce-stained dress
behind,
only interesting to humans,
or for teething cubs to find on
their own.

The Land of Judgment
Outward from the wasteland
to the social realm
Where there are many "toos"
His hair is too long
Her dress is too short
Her hair is too curly
In some place, his skin is
too dark
Too different
Too conformist
Too loud
Too quiet
Too smart
Too dumb
Too mean
Too nice
Too cool
Too many piercings
and a tattoo, too.
Everyone has to break their
back to get ahead
Or lie
Or steal
Or cheat
Or threaten
Or hurt
Or lie
Or lie
It's all fair.
The "fair" lie in a
disadvantage.
Those who would do things the
"right" way get
left behind
The lazy and selfish
venerated
But there are
The hard working
The kind
The "fair"
Those who listen
Those who want to help
Apathy fought with passion
A way to redeem oneself
To escape and be purged.
Past The Gates

Outside the walls
It's dangerous
There are many threats
and few guarantees.
No batteries
No medicine
It's cold
It's hot
No mass communication
Not much love.
But.
Not much hate.
A spectrum of colors with no
paints or synthetic dyes.
Music without music
A menagerie left and right
Large and small
A wide choice of scenery
A little slice of heaven
Some can stay forever
Many can't
Most don't want to.
There is evidence of the
inside,
a shred here,
a scrap there,
but for the most part, purged
or integrated, the land with
the leftovers
Trunks consume bicycles
Current events turn to soil
 Artificial mountains of
abandoned shelters covered in
natural moss and vines
Organic
It heals without aid
Outside the walls.
Excerpts from
See Then Now

A project I've been working on after hearing a reading and having a conversation with the wonderful Jamaica Kincaid, See Then Now is a collection of poems which criticizes the present world by looking at the past. The first part (some of which is shown here) focuses on how some things have not changed as much as we would wish they had ("See then now," the second on things that have changed for the worse ("I want to see then, now,")) and the final on things I hope the future keeps from our time ("I hope they see, then, now.") I was inspired to write it after mishearing the title of her book See Now Then and I was filled with ideas and began writing.

See Then Now - Violence

Killing in the name of
religion
race
gender
sexuality
politics
culture
geography
...

Maybe it'd be easier to list what isn't seen as worth killing for:

- Violence
  - Killing in the name of religion
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Sexuality
  - Politics
  - Culture
  - Geography

That said, it's still much of the same.

However many hundred, thousand, million years

We've been "sophisticated" we still fight

- Not just kill
- Abuse
- Mame
- Wound
- Attack
- Hurt

- Not just physically
- Mentally
- Socially
- Emotionally
- Economically

Not just then

Now as well

So see then now

See how we've changed

See the wars
  - The genocides
  - The fights
  - The arguments
  - The blood, sweat, and tears
Not going to construction
But destruction.

See Then Now -
Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Television screens spouting newsclips still play Statements by leaders or those who want to be Claiming some blight on humankind Caused by those who apparently "made up their mind" to like Those of their own sex And "Women" who work as hard as "men" are paid less in 2012 And People ogle strangely at those who dress how they choose, how they feel If how they choose doesn't meet up with society's predisposed expectations Of how they should, a "man" in a dress, a "woman" dressed as a "man" Decades after the Stonewall Riots Does "woman" or a "man" have any real individual value? Or is it a burqua Thrust on our shoulders to limit our vision of ourselves and others?

We haven't changed in message, Only in subtlety.

Where is the hit single where a "man" confesses "his" love to another "man"? Or "woman" likewise? "Women" are still shoppers or nags or whores or hags "Men" are still the breadwinners or slackers or studs or professionals "Women" still nurses "Men" still doctors.

Some insist that men should cloak emotion Or women should cook or clean but certainly not manage or lead.

Some insist that heterosexuality is the only "natural" sexuality which is both false and irrelevant to any value judgment they would splice thereto.

Some still talk of gayness or gender nonconformity as a disease, mental or even contagious, even contagious through a television or computer screen.

And there's a hostile, caustic recoil

Some insist a "man" can't be raped Or that "women" don't abuse Or that a "woman" who acts "girly" is wrong
for not being something "she" may not comfortably be.

And there's hostile, toxic infighting

Those who would promote gay rights
Exclude bisexuals
Those who might promote gay and bisexual rights
Exclude trans* people
They are seen as "complicating" the issue

As if it were easy.

See Then Now -
Nationalism

The disaster arguably still ongoing that was once called The Great War was Sparks by evergrowing national pride building to toxic rivalry.
The archduke likely never expected he'd be world-famous as Little more than the catalyst, not by intent, mind you, of a decades-long disaster.
Yet when I see a flag flying I smile and appreciate the rewards of being American,

We are not number one, I don't believe that as many do:

There are those who would see it a crime to burn that banner in protest
When nothing is more American than protesting the establishment; it's our history.
People killing Iranian women with notes saying "go back to your country."

Well, come to my world. A world of our world: I couldn't care less your homeland,
You're from here to whatever degree hereness unites, not divides.

But see then now?
A soccer game can cause a riot
A "foreigner" is seen as a threat to the home, not an opportunity for knowledge or friendship.

A flag is a symbol whose sole purpose seems to be division
A world that depends on globalization treats it like a necessary evil
When it has such good intentions...

What is better than us?
However big that us may be?
Water is only a barrier if you see water as a barrier,
Mountains only walls
If you want to keep something out.
See Then Now – Post/Colonialism

I see very little difference in meaning often, 'twixt postcolonialism and its predecessor.

Nigeria is still an extraction-based economy where the public is subjugated by the oppressive ruler.

Kenya the same.

Nary any recently "liberated" land shows much change in conditions, in fact it can be, in some ways destructive if there is no assistance from those nonresident.

Extraction without limits for "the better of the nation" does little for the masses and less for the individual.

So see then now, occupation from afar,

Below the radar and feet of your masters.

Gas flares and indentured servitude

The king is not from afar but right in your very home

And he is far more Ruthless Than the former occupation Ever was.

Nigeria is still an extraction-based economy where the public is subjugated by the oppressive ruler.

Kenya the same.

Nary any recently "liberated" land shows much change in conditions, in fact it can be, in some ways destructive if there is no assistance from those nonresident.

Extraction without limits for "the better of the nation" does little for the masses and less for the individual.

So see then now, occupation from afar,

miserydisease starvation violence

And when the masses or the individuals have had enough, they're the bad ones:

For disrupting the established order of things

Shut up and take your place
See Then Now –
Apathy

Way back when, some lands were isolationist, and the individuals likely didn't care about those far away.

What happened in Norway probably wouldn't be in the conversation for someone in the USA, They may not even know where Norway is.

So...

See then now

When in the USA have you heard about foreign politics?

On the news?

It's not like that everywhere.

I'm guilty as I write this, my lens is narrow, as well, but I'm aware of it.

We are a world; we are a global system.

There is no them unless you make one.

So why don't we care about us?

We only care about the "me"s or, at most, a very local "us."

People are dying

The world is, in many ways, falling apart.

But we shrug and putt around in our SUVs

In our off-shored sweat shop tees

And think "well it's someone else's problem."

"They're so far away"

"It's their fault for not doing something about it."

Meanwhile we drive past homeless at home

who will "probably spend the money on booze"

Like you can blame them, And do.

We drive past homeless at home

Who "probably aren't even looking for a job, expecting us to take care of them."

And we never stop To ask If that's true Simply Because We Don't Care.
See Then Now – Exploitation

There was a time not so long ago where the workers had no say in the conditions in which they worked.

Someone may have "sold" their "soul to the company store" or been stuck in work situations with dangerous white phosphorous.

And there was little they could do.

There was a time when good medical care was for the wealthy and home remedies were for the rest of us.

Even now, though, to some bosses, the customer is always right.

Even when they are wrong.

Even now, though, there are wage struggles while top level execs sit on a chair made of money on a floor made of money in a house made of money.

Even now if you get ill you may have to travel miles out of your way.

Because the local hospital is out of network for your insurance.

See then now.

Little has changed.

Life-sustaining pills cost unfathomable prices.

Women still make less than men.

Corporations are people, amoral people with wealthy, privileged heads making decisions for the body and environment.

Extraction of chemicals underground poison water, land, plant, and animal.

Corporations fund shoddy governments in poor countries to keep quiet anyone who decides "hey, I don't like suffering."

Everyone is of the "me first" mindset.

Everyone wants to "get" the other guy.

No one thinks about the other guy's situation as long as they can get ahead.

So sit down and take a look around.

Because life is not easy for anyone.
See Then Now - One
True Religionism

The Inquisition
The Crusades
Countless genocides west and east
Killing
Hating
Dividing
Greed
Torture
In the name of
The one true religion

Whichever it may be.

But that's all in the past...
Or not

See then now

Picketers saying who god hates
What you can or can't do

Whether you believe or not

And they'll let you know just
what's in store
For you
According to them
Those humans
Those fallible humans
Know exactly
What an omnipotent god
An omniscient god
Often a benevolent god
Hates.

Disbelief in their gods
Gives them the right
In their heads
To harass you
To picket you
To spit at your feet
For being different

Faith interferes and inflicts itself
On science
Placing road blocks on proper education for
Your children
Your doctors

On a subject we can't truly know
If there even is a god
What could mere humans ever know
About her or his (if such terms even mean anything)
Will?
Excerpts from
Life Is Beautiful
Picking The Brain of
the Insane

Life Is Beautiful: Picking The Brain of the Insane is my earliest, and longest running project at this point. It intends to be a larger book than the others, and is a collection of sociopolitical, philosophical, and various other topics of poetry, essays, and prose which intends to span a broad range of ideas, genera, and topics while still staying within my personality and overall style.

Embers
The leaves fall like embers and I am seared.
Gas-choked rivers glow from everburning flames.
The air of sulfur and hydrocarbon cocktail
Lead in the food, lead in the water
All is gray and black and fiery oranges and yellows, and reds of blood and flame alike.
Pacifists pushing for change for rights for medicine for anything
Sawed to pieces by automatic weapons Or strung over a bar by a rope
Native creatures and plants rotting in piles of soiled compost and char and settled smoke.
Where plants till can grow foreign noxious plants thrive and animals infest.
A stench of death and smoke and gas and pain and gas and blood and gas as it chokes.
The leaves fall like embers and I am seared.
Another day another dozen dead for a dollar.
Another night, a child with a fever that could be cured if the parents had the money.
The cover-ups as big names with big bright logos fund government oppression and
Assure their shareholders that consumers won't know a thing
Assure the consumers that things are humane murders humane poisoning humane abuse humane malnutrition humane forced poverty humane discrimination humane back room deals Nothing to see here.
The spines of the trees crack and the soldier woods fall.
The troops roll in as the ground shifts beneath their feet. They make off with their spoils and leave a sore and empty landscape.

The skies weep at the bloodshed, watershed for the wood shed in the back yard of the wealthy couple six thousand miles away.

The people stood their ground but voices are only heard if ears are listening.

So as the skies cry for fallen man, woman, child, beast, and greens

The ground swells and the land slides, burying a village, the same one that fought to save the thicket for fear of just this.

Twenty-five dead, hundreds homeless
And the soldiers march on
Another day, another dozen dead for a dollar.

Men, women, children, toiling in inhumane conditions
For black rocks whose sediment will be their death within the decade

In this land of no power, electrical or social
For rocks of gold, silver, whatever else color for gems and metals

It doesn't matter to them, it'll never be theirs
Those gorgeous rocks will make their home
On the fingers of the wealthy
across seas or vast
expanses of land
From their home, from their
pain, from their
desperation
Missing limbs from cave-ins
and faces obscured
by a layer of dust
Mining under duress of
starvation, no
breaks for putrid
water, restless
sleep, rotten food,
or the unsanitary
bathroom
A child falls to his knees,
overworked, and is
left to die, crying
for his mother,
miles away.
The bodies fall like ashes
and I am scarred.

Never Seen The Night

The child of only nine
Sits in a small pond, not
clear, but coated
in a film of all
colors, tinged with
a dark brown.
It is the morning hours,
perhaps just prior
to the crack of
dawn.
She doesn't know the meaning
of such words.
Neither because of education
or experience.
She lives in the Niger Delta
Once a lush land, green with
flora, home to
plenty of
creatures.
That is ancient history of
which she knows
none
Her family "lives" on a
couple hundred
dollars a year.
She likely is infected with
toxins they don't
know about
Her air is a smog, thick and
burning with
petrochemical
releases.
The land's strangest feature,
however, is it is a
land of never-
night.
In her nine years of
existence, she has
never once known
what night is.
Towerng mini-sun spires of
blazing hot fire
jut from the ground
belching thousands
of degrees.
An eternal sunlight, night,
day, everyday.
Unlike the Arctic with six
months of day and
six of night, this land
forgotten or ignored
by the oil-hungry lands abroad
is always in a perpetual daylight.

She's nine years old and has yet to see night
Because night doesn't exist
Night is simply another one of the rights
She doesn't receive where she lives.

A Kid, Four to Seven

I don't know where I am
I am scared.
There are more like me, here
What did I do?
Mom, where are you?
They beat those who don't obey,
Obeying is beating those who don't obey.
They taught us how to shoot a gun
By having us practice on others
I guess I'm the lucky one.
I first killed when I was five.
She, six, screamed for her life.
As I took my dull knife
And ran it across her throat
I didn't feel bad about it.
Here I lie,
In a ditch
Seven years old
Six bullets in my back
Dad.

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Fair Trade

I'm starving, my last meal was last Saturday.
I'm freezing, all I have is half a meter of cloth for a blanket.
I'm eight years old.
I have seven teeth, three black, one cracked.
I am almost legally blind, that's why I only have nine fingers.
Ten cents an hour, I work to help feed my family, my mother has AIDS, my father died of an impacted wisdom tooth.
My little brother, four, has Down Syndrome.
My older sister is missing a leg from an accident that seasons your cup of coffee.

And that shirt you're wearing? Under the black dye, is the blood from my now missing finger.
Warzone

Tons of machinery making paths
where they choose
Or where they're told
Starving children left out in the
cold
Fires consuming homes of the
innocent.
Over totally unrelated provoking
incidents
Gunfire taking down men, women,
children,
indiscriminately.
Starvation, intimidation,
"salvation," poor
sanitation
Isolation, conflagration,
incarceration, death.
Good, honest people, trying to
live life,
Under constant fear of whether or
not they will get to see
their homes again
Their husbands, wives, children
again.
Deemed infidels, marked for death,
on the basis of a cult
demanding respect
Threats made in the names of gods.
No true foundation for their
discrimination.

Locations destroyed, waste filling
the streets.
While those on their 'mission'
just pass it by,
Any chance of assistance
completely denied
Ignorance, arrogance, militants,
dissonance,
"Reverence," consequence,
vagrants, and fear.
Yet those in charge don't shed a
tear,
Calls for help, yet no one hears
Until the day they disappear.
Dehumanization of those different
from self.
Placing values on a dusty shelf.
Riches brought to rubble, science
blamed for trouble.
Nobody is really safe anymore
If this is city life, I'd hate to
go to war.
Pre-Occupied

The youth are our future
The lazy youth
I fear for the future
Need work experience
Need work experience, for your first job
Just get a job
Just get a job
Now hiring
Just not you.

Those occupiers
Those lazy slobs, wanting free money
Says the last Social Security generation.
Get a job
Lazy slob
Lazy, wanting free money
Just get a job.
In my day, we weren't afraid to roll up our sleeves or flip burgers.
Get a degree so you don't have to flip burgers.
Burger flippers failed the game of life
PhDs flipping burgers because s/he needs a job
To pay for loans for the PhD
Yes, I've graduated.
No, they're not hiring.
Yes, I've applied.
Yes, I'm trying.

That lazy youth
Just get a job, stop asking for handouts.

I did my time, and what's the prize?
Nothing but a piece of card stock in a frame, and ten years searching
Yes, I'm trying.
Since when is it lazy to feel let down, for not getting a job in the field of the degree? The degree that took up a large fraction of my life?
Yes I'm trying.
No they're not hiring.

The youth are our future.
To hell with the youth.

Even More Homeless

He's only nine.
He lives in a middle class house.
But short of that, he's alone.
He has parents, yes
A mother and a father who
Don't really care
To them he's been nothing but
A nine year burden they didn't want
But had never gotten rid of.

Given the bare necessities for life
He doesn't tell the kids at school
Who pick on him for his hair
His out-of-fashion clothes  
His height  
His weight  

After the walk home he says a feeble "hi mom, hi dad"  
As he creeps his way up the stairs  
Trying not to distract them from More important things.  
The TV channel changes.  
His door closes.  

He sits in his barren room at night  
A bed (of sorts) and a table loosely furnish the white box with cracked window.  

He may have a house  
But he's even more homeless than The street citizens  
The ones who have a community  

Friends, even family  
Just no permanent residence.  

He, nine,  
He knows what it really means to be homeless.  
He goes to the same place every night  
But never feels like he is where He should be.  
Somewhere out there There must be A parent or two Looking for a child  
While he sits here Looking For a home.  

Six Word Story: Poverty  
Kids play in an empty apartment.
To Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

Hello, my number is 7996, I'm 5'5'', weigh 95 lbs.
And I'm selling my soul
to sell my body
to sell your goods on prime
time commercials.
Who needs self esteem
in light of the American Dream?
The dream to be whatever you want to be
As long as the price is right.

Hello, my number is 7996, I'm infected in mind, anorexic,
So I can look good enough for the social standard
You can see my heart through my ribcage, and the shape of my skull through my mascara and rouge face
All this for just a taste Of acceptance.

Hello, my bed number is 7996
As I sit here attached to machines,
A victim of socially enforced self-destruction
I lie here in this hospital room
As a blanket is pulled across my face
I may be gone but at least I died Pretty, Right?

Words Like Bombs

Words, like bombs
Can kill
Have collateral damage
Hurt
Breed fear
Control.

Don't think so?

Tell that to the innocent one in court, deemed guilty of a crime he didn't commit. When the court concludes the fit punishment is "death" for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Tell that to the countless groups who fought and still do for equality in the eyes de jure and de facto while those of the Bystander Effect keep walking, and those who would oppress keep talking.

Tell that to the victims of bill collectors. They were committed to paying and on time, then the economy happened. Now they stare blankly out the window, then to
their two year old, then back, to the pantry, empty, the street, the phone. It rings.

Words, like bombs can destroy in an instant. And there's no turning back. The victims may recover may not, but once the detonator is pressed. There's only moving forward.

Words, like bombs can change everything in an instant. Once it's done, it's done, and all that's left is the fallout. Picking up the pieces. The consequences experienced by the survivors.

Words, like bombs with shrapnel, sharp, stinging, piercing. Possibly permanently lodged within can bring immeasurable pain.

Ten People In Ten Sentences

The guy on the corner finds a crisis in getting a $215 ticket for speeding. A girl halfway around the world is celebrating being able to eat dinner tonight. Some girl in a brand new SUV with a rhinestone
steering wheel cover is freaking out over not getting to go to a movie with her friend she sees every day.

A woman, right now, is thrilled she has a new skateboard on which to pull her legless body around.

Some three year old is screaming at his mom in a grocery store over coco crisps.

Some three year old is screaming for his mom dying of small pox.

A seven year old is not talking to her parents because she had her cell phone taken away.

A seven year old is feeding her family because she can't talk to her dead parents anymore.

A mother abuses her baby she irresponsibly had, but didn't want.

A gay man would do anything for a child he can't legally have.
The Corner of Main and Ash

The second block of the main street of downtown,
In front of the one-word-named-store that sells
Strange clothes, and stranger gadgets, run by a guy with
No less than three piercings, with spiked hair, dyed green
On the bench by the planter next to the newspaper machine
Sits a guy on the guitar, trying to eke out a couple more dollars to pay for his girlfriend's ring
He wants to propose on her birthday next month
He sings, pours his heart into the words as his voice rings
Guitar case open, filled with change, and a twenty clipped to the top in triumph of some kind stranger's generous gift to a guy in his shoes from not ten years previous
Farther down the street, a man in rags with a sign saying "Give me money" or something to that effect
Unlike many in his situation, he didn't fall on tough times,
He's fine, he just never tried and decides to rely on the hearts and kindness of hard-working fools who think he's unable to work for his food
He lives off of free, a strong willed greed, not caring
If he ever lives in a mansion, so long as he never has to work for his green
In the alley nearby is some poor guy with a spell so bad he can't get hired,
For even the simplest of jobs because he can't control His actions, he stares at night and shivers from chills, How he'd love to have the simplest skills, he'd get a job If he could, but everything so far is no good, He pains from the cruelty of the previously mentioned A miser, lazy, exploiting attention, making his life Harder since he can't do anything but this guy makes Cash by shyster-like begging

Gambling His Life Away
I'm Gus,
Yesterday I brought my teeth into the neck of another, like me She didn't have a chance, her body was worn out from over breeding, her teeth pulled out I did it out of mercy as she whined a painful thank you release Just two years ago life was good, my kid, I think his name was Jake, Let me out for an afternoon run, Next thing I know I'm in this pit, just trying to survive, To pad the pockets of some person who doesn't care about me, Doesn't feed me, doesn't value me,
 Doesn't value life,
 Tomorrow I'll be tossed in
   the garbage, like
   she was yesterday,
 With her, unborn litter they
   didn't realize she
   had.
 I miss you Jake.

 Where They Go To Die
 "Say bye bye to grandma"
 The last words I heard from
 my daughter
 As she left me in this place
 Forgotten by God
 I haven't seen my family in
 four years
 That wouldn't be a problem if
 that were all
 But the nurse
 If you can call him that
 He finds some sick
 entertainment in
 Hitting me, unable to walk
 Of my own accord, then labels
 it a fall and escapes
 The last I saw of my great
 grandchildren was yesterday
 They visit often, but never
 me, alive, again
 For last night, a nurse, mad
 at her husband,
 Took our her rage on my frail
 frame
 Smothered me with a pillow,
 if she wasn't going
 to see her kids again, she
 figured, I shouldn't either.

 We, alone, are where we all
 end up,
 Back in the Earth, before our
 time,
 We went willingly to the
 homes,
 Not wanting to burden our
 families,
 But they will never know,
 what truly happened.
Who Can Parent A Child

Murderers
Molesters
Rapists
The clinically insane
Drug addicts
Abusers
Violent maniacs
Irresponsible parents who leave the knives out
Homeless people who don't want to work
Who claim the kids just for the perks
A mother who has 15 other biological kids, only three from the same father
Who wants help paying for them
Even those willing to brainwash

... You know, as long as they're not gay.

Condemned to Death

She was told
She was bad
She was broken
She was an abomination
She wasn’t qualified to be a parent
She was confused
She deserved death

She took it
She killed herself

Because she felt bad
Because she felt broken
Because she felt like an abomination
Because she felt unqualified to be a parent
Because she felt confused
Because she was gay
Academic Misconduct

Academic stronghold with a sports mascot face
With a sports budget
With a sports section in the newspaper
Where athletes are first class and ahead of scholars and aesthetes
Where people come to better include athletes so they don't feel alienated.

While...

There is education, yes, but in some departments
Second to research, while teaching assistants are the Sole educators and graders
Students there to learn are fourth class
Below Alumni (who donate or succeed in the university's honor, of course)
Sports fans
And the aforementioned athletes
But the athletes are alienated.
Not we, here to learn, and heaven forbid you say you don't follow sports
Or you may as well hide your face

Disgrace

This campus with white walls and red rooves
and students and students and students and students and some athletes, too -- who are students.
Divide the time and money and students pay scores above sports
Enroll later, no financial support
Guaranteed.

Where:

Debate teams win national awards on the back page of the paper because our Basketball team
Lost a game, and that's news.
Academia at odds with its institution
But few care
And fewer speak out
Because challenge the system and you're a heretic
Who goes to school to learn?

I DO DAMNIT.

So give me a sign that I mean something to the place
That took
Four years and
Forty thousand dollars
And gave me a piece of card stock with a seal.
Maybe.

If that card stock is not too much to ask, that is.

How To Fix Things

Don't pray for me
Don't pray for change
Don't pray for peace
Don't pray for truth
Look for truth
Strive for peace
Work for change
Think for yourself